

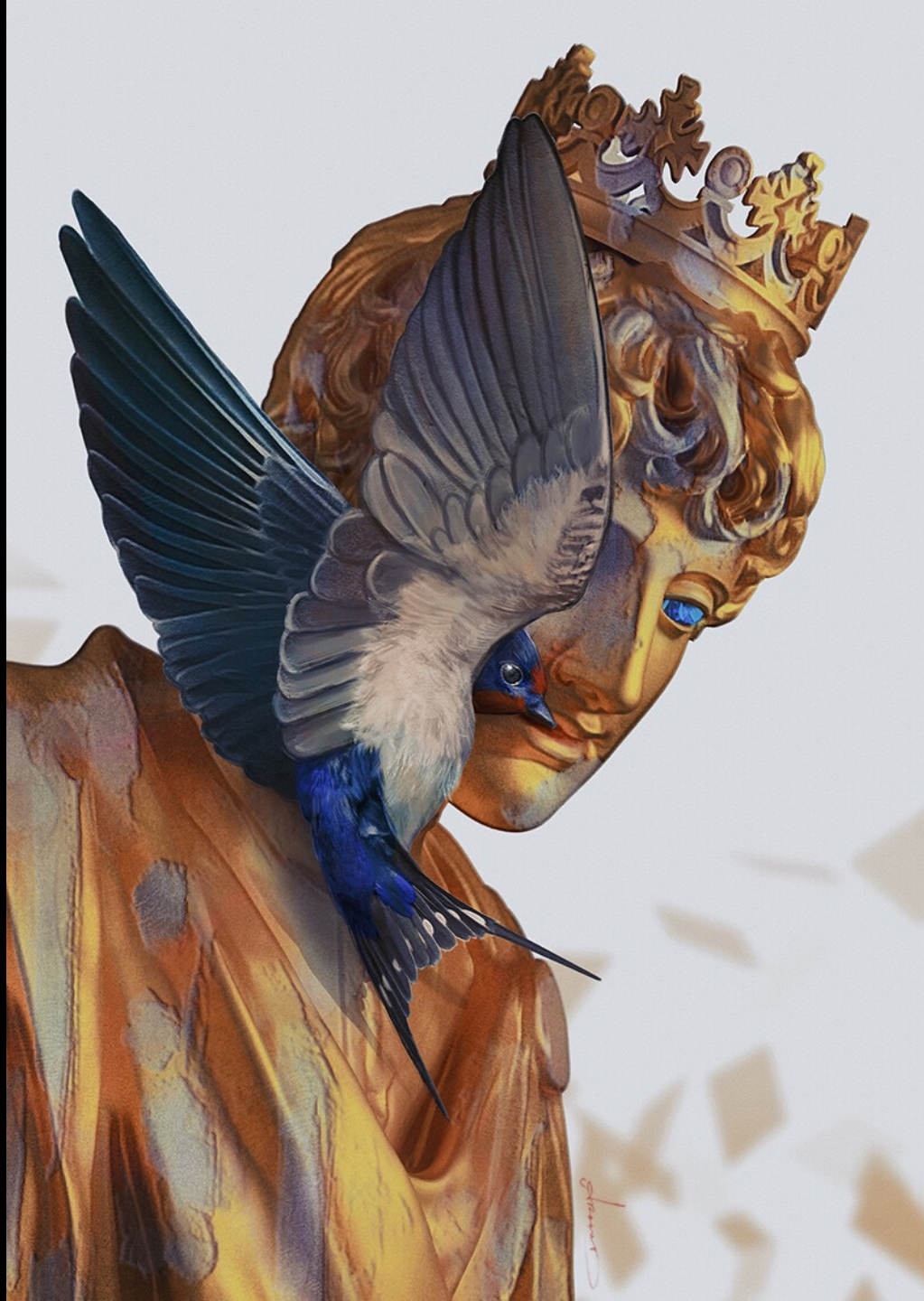
Saul-Paul's Seeing













Some intertextual considerations

- Physical blindness comes by truthful seeing.
- Vulnerability assists transformation.
- Characters gain new vision when blind. (Acts 9:8)
 - Other Lukan visionaries: Zachariah, Mary, the women at the tomb who saw angels, Peter, Ananias, Stephen (just before Paul's blindness), and Cornelius.
 - Paul's subsequent visions: vision of the man in Macedonia, the Lord telling him to fear going to Corinth, and the angel on the ship assuring him that all the people on board would be spared.

Luke's sight/blindness Isaiah reference

In Luke 4:18, Jesus quotes Isaiah, saying “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me, to proclaim good news to the poor. **He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind**, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.”

Isaiah 61: “**to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.**”

The notes in my bible say, “or the opening [of the eyes] to those who are blind; or in the Septuagint *and recovery of sight to the blind.*”

If this image of prison is associated with blindness language, then Paul is also experiencing some measure of what he has done to the Christians he has committed to prison.

Another intertextual connection

- Suffers to aid those whom he caused to suffer.

Oscar Wilde wrote from prison, “I now see that sorrow, being the supreme emotion of which man is capable, is at once the type and test of all great Art. What the artist is always looking for is that mode of existence in which soul and body are one and indivisible: in which the outward is expressive of the inward: in which Form reveals. Pain [produces] the beautiful Soul” (qtd. in Sturgis 574). And in this way, Wilde identified his experiences of suffering in prison with Christ (Sturgis 574).

Source:

Sturgis, Matthew. *Oscar Wilde: A Life*. Knopf, 2021.

Paul's Literal Darkness for Three Days: Links to Death and Birth of New Direction

- Jonah in the belly of the fish for three days
- Three days between Christ's death and resurrection



Resonates with Genesis 1: The cosmos is blind, in the dark, before God's words say, "Let there be light." A voice is heard first before seeing, as we also see in Paul's narrative.

Paul connects this light/dark imagery to creation in 2 Corinthians 4: "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is in the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."



Conversion of St. Paul
by Caravaggio,
1600/1601



*The Conversion on the Way to
Damascus by Caravaggio, 1601*



Paul in Prison by Rembrandt, 1627

Flannery O'Connor and "Disruptive Grace"

"I have found that violence is strangely capable of returning my characters to reality and preparing them to accept their moment of grace. Their heads are so hard **that almost nothing else will work.**"

--reference to "A Good Man is Hard to Find"

“Apparition Dialogue”

by Gerhard Lohfink

Gen 46:2f

...saying...

Jacob, Jacob!

But he said:

What is (it)?

Saying:

I am the God of your fathers.

Stop being afraid to go down...

Acts 9:4-6

...saying to him

Saul! Saul!

But he answered:

Who are you, Lord?

But he...

I am Jesus, the one whom you persecute

But rise and go...

Gen 22:1-2

**...and he said to him:
Abraham, Abraham!**

**He answered:
Here I am!**

**And he said:
Take your son and go...**

Acts 9:10-11

**...and he said to him:
Ananias!**

**He answered:
Here I am, Lord!**

**And the Lord said to him:
Rise, go...**

Dr. Craig Keener on Paul's Conversion

Luke's account of Paul's conversion falls naturally in the divine-call scenes in the Old Testament, "especially Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel). Some of these inaugural calls (Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel) occurred in theophanies, as here." Keener says Isaiah's call is most important to Luke.

Paul's conversion experience in Acts 9 and "others in Acts (e.g., 18:7-11) evoke OT commissioning accounts (and may reflect their literary influence). (Such commissioning narratives are so important to Luke that according to some counts, he includes as many in his two-volume work, as broadly defined, as in the entire OT.) Both Paul's letters and Luke depict Paul's conversion and call experience in ways that recall Jeremiah. **Paul's experience resembles that of OT prophets, whose credentials rested on their charismatic experience of divine calling rather than on hierarchical authority.**"

Dr. Keener continued

- Luke emphasizes “God’s sovereignty in converting the persecutor.”
- “Paul’s Gentile mission was God’s idea, God’s initiative, and ultimately God’s accomplishment.”
- Possibly, “Luke highlights Paul’s account to emphasize that God can save anyone, even the most hostile.”
- Those who really accept Christ forsake all.